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543

5. THINGS SEEN AT BORSEC FAIR, AUGUST 20TH

[280]

1. Material by the Yard.

Cotton: Prints, calicoes, zephyrs, ginghams, men's shirtings.
Wool: Coloured serges, rough grey and brown woollen material (very thick) for men's and women's winter clothing.
Artificial Silk: In plain colours, Crêpe de Chine in plain colours, a very few printed silks.
Lace: Coarse white lace edgings (from Nottingham).

[291]

2. Clothing.

Men's: Trousers, coats, waistcoats, cloth caps, embroidered lambskin waistcoats, braces.

Women's: Knitted and crocheted wool caps and berets, patent leather belts. Printed cotton and artificial silk pieces for head coverings. Ribbons.

Children's: Babies' knitted woollen garments. Modern-style dresses in artificial silk with machine-made embroidery. Socks and stockings of cotton and wool hand-knitted in Roumania. Artificial silk stockings manufactured from yarn imported from Switzerland and France.

[295]

3. Boots and Shoes for Men, Women and Children.

Field boots and heavy nailed boots for men.
Manufactured boots and shoes for women and children.
Ready-made peasant shoes of leather.
Ready-made peasant shoes of leather with rubber attached to sole.
Ready-made peasant shoes made from old motor tyres.
Shoes of plaited felt of all sizes for women and children.
Shoes of knitted coarse wool with straps.
Pieces of leather of correct size for making the peasant shoes and leather thongs for lacing them.
Leather and mohair laces for using with the manufactured boots and shoes.

[415]

4. Pottery.

Large brown glazed earthenware pots only. No other pottery of any kind was seen in the fair.

[295]

5. Baskets, etc.

Hand-made of rushes gathered by the peasants who make them. Some colour introduced into the larger baskets; strong, neat weaving. Also a few big hats as worn in the fields by the Hungarian peasant women.

[414]

6. Greengrocery.

Turnips, potatoes, yellow beans, cabbages, gherkins, carrots, onions, tomatoes, ardei, lemons, apples, pears, Indian corn, water melons, cantaloupes.

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543
[257]

7. CONFECTIONERY, ETC.

Gingerbread (all shapes).

Sweets: Packets of sweets, sweet-stuffs in various shapes. Dolls, ladies, hearts, diamonds, all with rough pieces of mirror inset.

[524]

8. TOYS.

The only toys for children seen were gaily-coloured thin rubber balls (large), also small wooden flutes similar to those used by shepherds.

[322]

9. CARVED WOODEN ARTICLES.

Wooden cigarette-holders; various sizes, some grotesquely large.

Mirrors with flower-borders carved in high relief.

Match-stands, cigarette stands, wooden boxes.

Large pipes (for playing jokes). Powder is secreted in the mouth-piece and is puffed into the face when the pipe is blown.

10. ARTICLES FOR THE HOME.

[285]

Blankets patterned in red and natural wool.

Rug-strips made of pieces of cotton and woollen waste pieces of material.

[415]

Modern cooking tins and saucepans, enamelled dishes and all sorts of "Household Helps," which attracted crowds of peasant women, e.g. egg and tomato slices, vegetable cutters, pastry moulds, etc.

Strainers with wooden frame and wire base, the wire coloured in tartan and other patterns.

Alarm clocks, boot polish in tins, soap, hempen rope and string.

[301]

11. CHEAP JEWELLERY, ETC.

Rings, brooches, neck and watch chains. Necklaces of coloured pearl and glass beads. Spectacles of plain and tinted glass. Jewelled combs for wearing in the hair. Studs, fancy buttons, thimbles, all kinds of plain and fancy pins. Mirrors.

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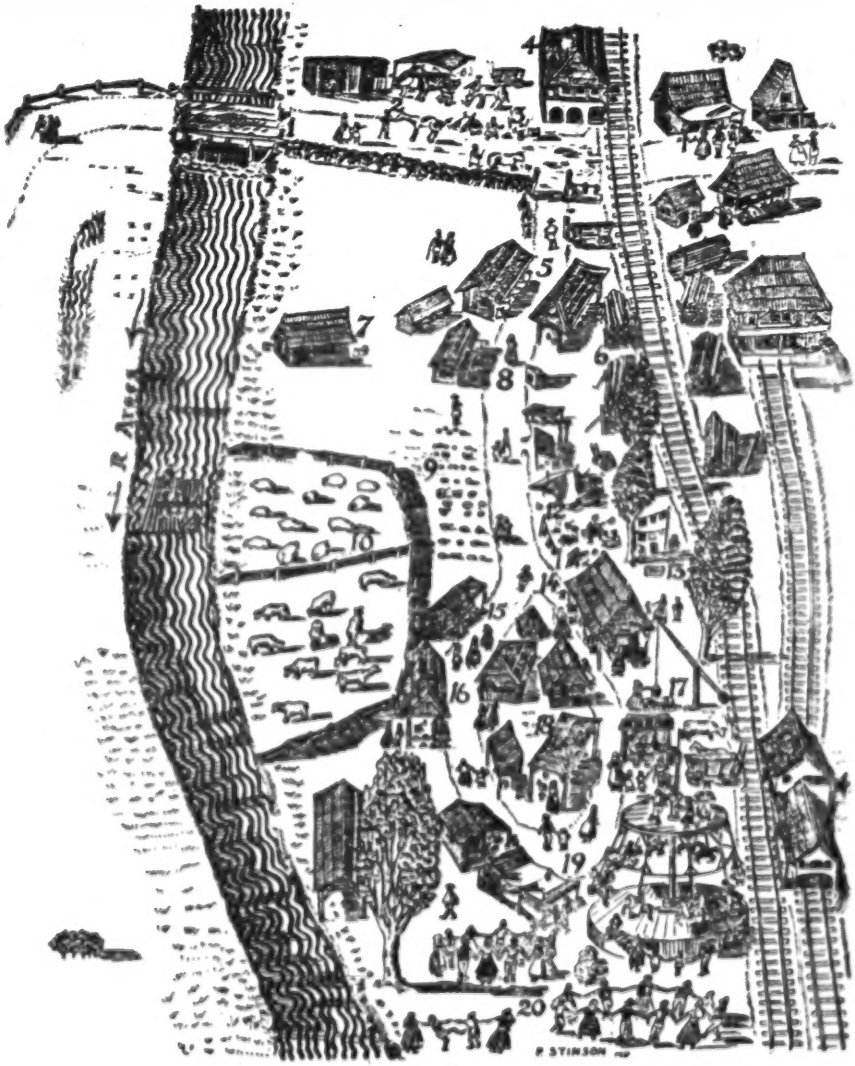
THE FAIR

IN AGRICULTURAL COMMUNITIES it is customary for the exchange of goods to be concentrated at certain periodic gatherings known as fairs. The countryman has little time to spare for commerce, and where an element of pastoral nomadism is present, as in Roumania, the times of meeting will be closely restricted. Fairs tend, in Europe, to be held in summer: frequently at the beginning and end of summer—in May and November—when the year's routine is broken by seasonal changes of activity. They are often well developed in regions of pastoral nomadism, where they serve as social centres and may be regarded as temporary market towns. The weekly *suq* in Morocco, for example is an essential feature of the economic and social life of the country, which has recently been studied by Mr. Fogg.

IN EUROPE, where the market town is an ancient product of rural society, fairs usually supplement the functions of established towns, although in origin they are thought to be much older than urban life. They have been described as parasite towns brought into being to meet the periodic needs of country dwellers, but such a description fails to reveal their significance.

THE SUBJECT of fairs in its social and economic aspects has scarcely received the attention it merits in the history of Europe. It is true that the great fairs of the Middle Ages, such as those of Champagne and Flanders, have often been described, but they were "commodity fairs," concerned with the exchange of goods over wide areas and frequented by merchants from all parts of Europe. As is well known, the *foci* of these great fairs moved eastwards into Germany in the sixteenth century, and again in the nineteenth century into Russia, where Nijni Novgorod has held an exceptional position for over a century. In central Asia, as in Africa (cf. the annual *mouggar* of South Morocco), much commerce is still conducted at such commodity fairs. While the development of communications and of means of exchange has undermined the large fairs in Europe, the local fair is still an active institution.

●543



PLAN OF THE FAIR. *Drawn by P. Stinson after E. E. Evans.*

1. Bridge.
2. Shoeing-smith.
3. Tinker.
4. Stations.
5. Stores for salt, maize and fruit.
6. Timber.
7. Mill.
8. Weighing machine and toll office.
9. Pots.
10. Enclosures for animals.
11. Food stalls.
12. Gipsy camp.
13. Skirts and rugs.
14. Shirts and waistcoats.
15. Leather goods.
16. Factory goods and trinkets.
17. Well and peasants' carts.
18. Restaurants.
19. Amusements.
20. Dancing.

[Page 55]

543 527 443 THE FAIRS at Curtea de Argeș are held twice a year, each lasting about a week and ending respectively on August 15th (Assumption) and October 25th (St. Demetri). The association with Christian festivals is a widespread feature (the word "fair" is derived from *feriæ*, feast), the fairs attracting the crowds which gather for the festivals. It can sometimes be shown that the time and place of meeting are older than Christianity and that the periodic pagan assemblies later received the sanction of the Church. The fair, at any rate, satisfies a deep peasant instinct for worship, the exchange of goods and social intercourse.

THE AUGUST fair at Curtea corresponds with the early harvests of fruit—especially the plum—and, formerly, with the cereal harvests (buckwheat and millets) which maize replaced. It is probably connected in origin with the Lammas fairs of the West. The first of August, in the ancient Celtic calendar, marked the beginning of autumn and was celebrated as a harvest festival. In Ireland the day is still called Lewy's Fair, and is traditionally associated with the lighting of fires, with games and the making of marriage matches. Lammas fair is the largest of the year in some Irish towns.

THE OCTOBER fair would seem to derive its importance primarily from the return of the stock from the mountain pastures, when cheese and wool and surplus animals can be exchanged. A feature of the October fair is the high proportion of sheep and goats among the stock offered for sale. In the French Alps, too, the autumn stock fairs are the most important of the year. The maize harvest has by this time been gathered even in the Carpathian valleys, where winter sets in early. But whatever the position may once have been, the fairs are now more concerned with goods than with stock.

543 CURTEA FAIR-GROUND is situated on the flood plain, on waste ground kept free of permanent habitations by the danger of spring floods. The scarp leading to the first river-terrace rises steeply behind and is planted with trees which provide [312] some shelter for peasants and animals. Here, too, under the scarp, is the well which supplies the needs of man and beast. [496] The main railway—terminus of the line downstream to Pitesti—has extensive sidings on the first terrace immediately behind, while the branch (timber) line to Cumpana runs

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543 through a corner of the fair-ground as it begins its journey northwards. The fair-ground extends from the bridgehead, where in former times there must have been a ford, southwards for an indefinite distance between river and railway. A tributary stream which joins the Argeş at the bridge is named, after the fair, Valea *Târgul*. From the bridge a lane winds southwards to the rows of buildings and sheds which
256 constitute the permanent nucleus of the fair. Here is the corn mill, perhaps once dependent on power from the river, but now driven by electricity. We may note in passing that among the many survivals in the Carpathians is the horizontal water-wheel, used here as in Norway to turn corn mills. The mill consists of a log-hut erected directly over a stream
543 or a branch of a river. The sale of cereals, chiefly maize, is
443 also conducted by the mill, at the entrance to the fair, and there are stores of building materials, fruit, rock-salt and charcoal.

Rows of permanent open-sided sheds face each other along the "main street" of the fair, and are hired for the duration by merchants and caterers. Other goods—mostly those brought by peasants—are displayed in improvised booths or exposed on the ground by the wayside. Further on, the inevitable amusements are concentrated in a corner of their own, the stalls in this section increasing in number throughout the week, until pleasure becomes the chief business by the last days of the fair. This is the natural culmination of events which begin with the sale of cattle in the opening days; the "order of the fair" is a traditional feature of such gatherings everywhere.

543 But in Roumania there is another element which contributes
326 to the variety of the fair—the gipsies who pitch their camps
563 behind the booths and hawk trinkets or unobtrusively engage in metal-work and wood-carving. They appear to keep apart from the rest. To them the food-stallholders bring their copper pots, used for boiling fat, for retinning, while the peasants drive up the draught oxen which may need to be reshod. The tinning is done over an improvised hearth and a handful of charcoal; the shoeing—by the bridge-head—requires somewhat more elaborate equipment in the shape of
[735] a forge and a post and ropes for felling the oxen. Finally, squatting by the wayside, or actively exhibiting their sores, there are the beggars and cripples, who complete the human picture.

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●543 443 We have classified the chief items observed at the fair between August 11th and 15th, 1936.

1. *Livestock.* Draught oxen, cows and calves, pigs and piglets. A few horses and goats. No sheep or fowl. The bargaining for cattle is completed when the buyer contrives to thrust a piece of silver into the hand of the seller. Acceptance of the earnest is followed by a hand-clasp.

[391] 2. *Agricultural Implements and Metal-work.*—It is said that gipsy-made metal tools were formerly displayed, but what little metal-work is now sold is factory-made and comes mostly from Czechoslovakia—cow-bells (of sheet-metal), horse-bells (of cast-metal), knives, etc. Hay-forks are gipsy-made, as are washing tubs and cradles, hollowed out of split tree trunks. Kitchen spoons are hand-carved. Wooden saddles and gipsy-made baskets and brooms may come under this head.

3. *Fruits and Vegetables.*—Tomatoes, potatoes, sweet-corn, onions, garlic, peppers, cabbage, water-melons, gherkins, aubergines, pears, apples, plums, blackberries. Also eggs and cheese.

[32?] 4. *Pottery.*—The chief local craft is naturally well represented. The vessels, displayed on the ground, vary greatly in size, decoration and purpose; but they are all of brown clay, usually with simple floral patterns and debased geometrical designs in burnt sienna, yellow and green: vessels with or without lids, with or without handles, with or without spouts, glazed inside, outside, or both, in size ranging from salt-and-pepper stands to large waterpots. We find the old device of making pots in imitation of birds and animals.

[282] 5. *Leatherwork.*—Several booths display white leather sheepskin waistcoats, having the wool inside and the outside decorated with applied strips of thin orange-dyed leather embroidered usually by machine stitching, but occasionally by hand. These waistcoats are made at Curtea de Arges. Leather belts, 4 to 6 inches wide, are machine-stitched but hand-tooled; they have buckle fastenings. Bridles and saddlery. Knotted leather thongs for whips. Hempen ropes for halters are sold in this section, too. Ready-made boots and shoes. The bulk of the shoes for sale, however, are made of rubber, in the shape of the traditional pointed shoe of skin. Most of them are cut from old motor tyres, but others are now made from specially manufactured rubber strips which repeat the patterns of the tyres.

543 443 [286]

6. *Woven Goods.*—Here the high skill and craftsmanship of the Carpathian peasant is most obviously illustrated. Woollen cloths are the commonest, carded wool also being offered for sale. Linen, silk and hempen stuffs are displayed, the finer materials often having gold or silver threads woven into them; they are made up into blouses, skirts, veils and belts. Some machine-made cotton goods also for sale.

[531]

7. *Embroidered Goods.*—Velvet waistcoats with gold embroidery and bead work. Linen or woollen cloths are embroidered with wool, silk, or mercerised cotton. Round sequins, thought to betray Turkish influence, are very popular.

8. *Carpets.*—Locally woven carpets of traditional colours and designs far outnumber machine-made copies of Persian carpets.

9. *Food and Confectionery.*—Bread, doughnuts, sausages, fish, gingerbread, sweets. Sugar dolls, hearts, circles, diamonds and other shapes. Sugar rosaries. Drinks are hawked by Turkish itinerants. The restaurants and drinking booths have gipsy fiddlers.

10. *Cheap Jewellery.*—Trinkets, mirrors, beads, combs, buttons, studs, pins, rings, brooches, etc.

543 517

11. *Entertainments.*—The fat woman and the one-minute photographer, shooting ranges, cock-shies, games of chance, fortune-telling. The merry-go-round is driven by five men, who push it round on a high wooden platform fixed to the central axis, with the accompaniment of peasant music. Other bands supply music for the dancing which takes place under the trees.

543 443

APART FROM the gipsy goods and the articles offered in the permanent booths, the goods displayed vary from day to day as different groups of peasants come in from the country. There is a constant coming and going of bullock carts over the bridge, bringing in stock and peasant products for sale. The normal limit of influence exerted by the fair is some 25 kilometres.

E. E. E.

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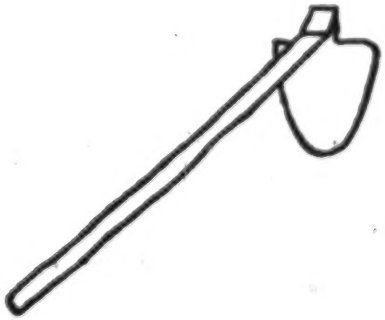

Hoe.
Blade the size of an English spade. See page 41.

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